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Dean Christie's Letter

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Dean Christie's Letter

The new Sir James Dunn Law Library is open! The Official Opening, capping an exciting week of Law School "happenings", will be on October 21, 1989, but the real "Opening" occurred in mid-May. Summer student maintenance employees had worked night and day from the end of exams moving books from their temporary storage in the Killam Library to the new Law Library, to the accompaniment of ubiquitous rock music blaring from their radio. On the morning of Monday, May 15, Chief Law Librarian, Professor Christian Wiktor, solemnly intruded on them and firmly turned the radio off, with the announcement: "This is now a library."—and so it is!

Construction is continuing, to complete the renovations of the Weldon Building to make it work with the new library and, in the process, to give Dalhousie Law School a fine, efficient and attractive teaching facility. That work should be finished when classes start after Labour Day. This last of four years in temporary library facilities has been a full and rewarding one for all of us at the Law School, but life should be easier now.

Professor Bruce Wildsmith has been associate dean for this year, with Professor Susan Ashley slated to take that office for the next three years, after two years as executive secretary with the Marshall Inquiry.

Effective July 1, 1988, Brent Cotter left the office of associate dean, in which he had piloted the Law School through the perils of the fire of 1985 and construction thereafter. He went to the Dal Legal Aid Clinic, where he has very successfully fought another sort of fire. Under his leadership, the clinic has flourished, and late in the winter regained its funding from the Nova Scotia Legal Aid Commission. The summer of 1988 was the first in which law students could work at Dal Legal Aid for a term's worth of credit, enabling them to finish at Christmas. That experiment is being repeated this summer, under Professor Lorenne Clark's directorship.

In October, Dr. David Williams, vice-chancellor elect of Cambridge University, delivered the Read Lecture and participated in the annual meeting conference of the Canadian Institute for the Administration of Justice, held in Halifax for the first time. The conference, which dealt with law and the environment, was chaired by Mr. Justice R. MacLeod Rogers of the Supreme Court of Nova Scotia and me, and brilliantly organized by the Environmental Law group at Dalhousie Law School.

On November 4, the regular routine of the university and of the law school was disrupted by a faculty strike/board lockout at Dalhousie University. The stoppage, which received extensive media coverage, lasted nearly three weeks. All full-time members of the law faculty participated, while students completed term papers, went to a few classes taught by downtowners, or simply took a holiday.

As soon as the strike/lockout ended, the law school got down to business with no further delay, thanks to the leadership of law student council President, Grant Borbridge, and faculty members on the DEA executive. By agreement, classes ran late in the term and exams were put off until after Christmas, with the result that both terms were a week and a half shorter than usual. Three students sued the university in small claims court for damages based on the portion of their tuition lost due to the faculty strike/board lockout. In late February they presented their cases ably and made MITV that evening, but lost their case.

In March, the new student executive was elected, with Cynthia Thomas being elected as president. In a year in which the participation of minorities in the justice system and in the law school has been very much in the forefront, it is significant that Ms. Thomas is a Black woman native to Dartmouth, Nova Scotia. Public focus on the Marshall Inquiry was paralleled by a Saturday forum on racial issues in the law school, organized by a student committee chaired by Catherine Cogswell.

In matters of law teaching, the 1988–89 year not only marked the first summer program at Dal Legal Aid, it also saw the successful launch of the Business Law Immersion Term, with a dozen students being guided through the intricacies of a developing business scenario by Professors Les O'Brien and Dawn Russell, and learning both law and lawyering in the process. Also, 1988–89 was the first year for the newly mandatory course in Legal Profession and Professional Responsibility, conceived and led by Professor Brent Cotter, assisted by Professor Clark and me.

Perhaps most important, this year marked a move of the small group class in first year from Judicial Decision Making and the Law of Contract to Public Law. Early returns suggest that this switch, which marks the change in the focus of law in general and of Dalhousie Law School in particular, was very well received by both students and faculty members.

Unhappily, the end of the 1988-89

academic year saw the departure of Professor Ian Townsend Gault for UBC, where he will direct that law faculty's Pacific Rim Program. Professor Richard Devlin also concluded a second one-year term appointment and left for a tenure track appointment at the University of Calgary Faculty of Law. In the months before his departure, Professor Devlin was instrumental in establishing Dalhousie's new Law Program for Indigenous Blacks and Micmacs.

The law school appointments committee, chaired by Professor Faye Woodman, guided the faculty to the tenure track appointment of Professor Mary Ellen Turpel, who joined us July 1, 1989.

Also, funding has been received for three term appointments. The Canadian International Development Agency is funding a project on environmental management for Indonesia, which is being administered by Dalhousie's School of Resource and Environmental Studies. The law school will receive a small share of this, to hire a professor of environmental law. Professor Linda Duncan will join the faculty in September in this special post for a two year term.

The Law Foundation of Nova Scotia granted Dal Law School funding to establish a new program to enhance the position of minorities, Nova Scotia Blacks and Natives in particular, in the law school. Late this summer, we will commence a formal search for a Black or Native person to be appointed to the tenure track position of director. In the meantime, Professor Wayne MacKay is acting director. Professor Patricia Monture has been appointed to a one-year term to teach Professor MacKay's Constitutional and Public Law courses.

Finally, the Dalhousie faculties of law and medicine have been awarded a \$400,000 grant by Donner Canadian Foundation to establish a Health Law Institute. A major part of these funds will be used to appoint a director of the institute jointly to the faculties of law and medicine for a three-year term. The formal search for a person qualified for this very special position will begin in early autumn.

In sum, with a very eventful year behind us, Dalhousie Law School seems poised on the edge of an exciting future in a new building, with important new programs and a dynamic Faculty. □

Innis Christie